

needs them quickly. By helping Iraq's elected leaders get the Iraqi forces they need, we will help Iraq's democratic Government become more effective in fighting the terrorists and other violent extremists, and in providing security and stability, particularly in Baghdad.

Third, success in Iraq requires strong institutions that will stand the test of time and hardship. Our goal in Iraq is to help Prime Minister Maliki build a country that is united, where the rule of law prevails and the rights of minorities are respected. The Prime Minister made clear that splitting his country into parts is not what the Iraqi people want and that any partition of Iraq would lead to an increase in sectarian violence.

Security in Iraq requires sustained action by the Iraqi security forces, yet in the long term, security in Iraq hinges on reconciliation among Iraq's different ethnic and religious communities. And the Prime Minister has committed his Government to achieving that goal.

The Prime Minister and I also discussed the review of America's strategy in Iraq that is now nearing completion. As part of this review, I've asked our military leaders in the Pentagon and those on the ground in Iraq to provide their recommendations on the best way forward.

A bipartisan panel, led by former Secretary of State James Baker and former Congressman Lee Hamilton, is also conducting a review. And I look forward to receiving their report next week. I want to hear all advice before I make any decisions about adjustments to our strategy in Iraq.

I recognize that the recent violence in Iraq has been unsettling. Many people in our country are wondering about the way forward. The work ahead will not be easy, yet by helping Prime Minister Maliki strengthen Iraq's democratic institutions and promote national reconciliation, our military leaders and diplomats can help put Iraq on a solid path to liberty and democracy. The decisions we make in Iraq will be felt across the broader Middle East.

Failure in Iraq would embolden the extremists who hate America and want nothing more than to see our demise. It would strengthen the hand of those who are seeking

to undermine young democracies across the region and give the extremists an open field to overthrow moderate governments, take control of countries, impose their rule on millions, and threaten the American people. Our Nation must not allow this to happen.

Success in Iraq will require leaders in Washington—Republicans and Democrats alike—to come together and find greater consensus on the best path forward. So I will work with leaders in both parties to achieve this goal. Together we can help Iraqis build a free and democratic nation in the heart of the Middle East, strengthen moderates and reformers across the region who are working for peace, and leave our children and grandchildren a more secure and hopeful world.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 7:50 a.m. on December 1 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 2. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 1 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the Children's Holiday Reception

December 4, 2006

Thanks for coming. Laura and I want to welcome you all to the White House. We're really happy you're here. I think you're going to really enjoy this special occasion. My job is to introduce my wife, Laura Bush. [*Laughter*] Before I do so, though, I want to say something about your moms and dads. I thank you very much for supporting your mom and dad as they're on a very important mission for our country. I want you to know that they love you dearly and the American people love and respect those who wear our uniform a lot.

I know it's tough to have your mom or dad overseas, and we wish you all the best. But it's really important work. And so we wanted to welcome you here to the White House to, first of all, thank you for your strength, and so that you would do me a favor and e-mail your mom or dad who is overseas

how much the Commander in Chief respects them, admires them, and supports them.

So welcome to the White House. We're glad you're here. And now I'm going to introduce my wife, Laura Bush.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:40 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks Following Discussions With Chairman Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq

December 4, 2006

President Bush. Your Eminence, welcome back to the Oval Office. This is the second opportunity I've had to meet with one of the distinguished leaders of a free Iraq. This is a man whose family suffered unbelievable violence at the hands of the dictator, Saddam Hussein. He lost nearly 60 family members, and yet rather than being bitter, he's involved with helping the new Government succeed.

We talked about a lot of important issues. I appreciate so very much His Eminence's commitment to a unity government. I assured him the United States supports his work and the work of the Prime Minister to unify the country. Part of unifying Iraq is for the elected leaders and society leaders to reject the extremists that are trying to stop the advance of this young democracy. I appreciated very much His Eminence's strong position against the murder of innocent life.

We talked about the need to give the Government of Iraq more capability as quickly as possible, so that the elected Government of Iraq can do that which the Iraqi people want, which is to secure their country from the extremists and murderers. I told His Eminence that I was proud of the courage of the Iraqi people. I told him that we're not satisfied with the pace of progress in Iraq, and that we want to continue to work with the sovereign Government of Iraq to accomplish our mutual objectives, which is a free country that can govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself—a free country which will

serve as an ally in the war against the extremists and radicals and terrorists.

So, Your Eminence, welcome back. Thank you for the very constructive conversation we had.

Chairman Hakim. In the name of God, the merciful, the passionate, and blessing upon Prophet Mohammed and his purified family and his loyal companions. My meeting with President Bush today emerges from our shared commitment towards continued dialog and consultation among us and also on the basis of our conviction that the Iraqi issue is a mutual interest. It's an issue that requires coordination between the two sides in a way that concerns both of us politically and from a security point of view and economic point of view as well.

Therefore, our conversation today focused on ways to advance the work of the Iraqi Government, the elected Government, as well as to advance the whole situation in Iraq and move it forward. Also, we have discussed ways in order to provide all the necessities that the Iraqi Armed Forces will need, in terms of armament, in terms of trainings, in order to be in a position to assume the security file.

The Iraqi situation is being subjected to a great deal of defamation, and the true picture is not being presented in order to show a dark side of what's happening in Iraq. We see the attempts to defame and distort the situation in Iraq, not taking into consideration the democratic steps that that country has taken, writing the Constitution and establishing a state that depends heavily on the Constitution, that it is unified and that it is strong. There are attempts to show the sectarian strife in an attempt to weaken the position in Iraq.

The U.S. interests, the Iraqi interests, the regional interests, they are all linked. Therefore, it is very important when we deal with this issue, we look at the interests of the Iraqi people. If we don't, this whole issue could backfire and could harm the interests of the region, the United States, and Iraq as well.

Therefore, we believe that the Iraqi issue should be solved by the Iraqis with the help of friends everywhere. But we reject any attempts to have a regional or international